



**RCA  
CITY OF AUSTIN  
RECOMMENDATION FOR COUNCIL ACTION**

**AGENDA ITEM NO.: 55  
AGENDA DATE: Thu 03/24/2005  
PAGE: 1 of 2**

**SUBJECT:** Conduct a public hearing and approve proposed design standards for commercial and retail development.

**AMOUNT & SOURCE OF FUNDING:** N/A

**FISCAL NOTE:** N/A

**REQUESTING** Neighborhood Planning     **DIRECTOR'S**  
**DEPARTMENT:** and Zoning                     **AUTHORIZATION:** Alice Glasco

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:** George Adams, 974-2146; Sylvia Arzola, 974-6448

**PRIOR COUNCIL ACTION:** 2/26/04 - Council directed the City Manager to prepare recommendations for citywide design standards for commercial and retail development; 2/17/05 - Set public hearing.

**BOARD AND COMMISSION ACTION:** Reviewed by Design Commission, and to be reviewed by the Zoning and Platting Commission on 3/29/05, and the Planning Commission on 3/22/05.

**PURCHASING:** N/A

**MBE / WBE:** N/A

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On February 26, 2004, the City Council directed the City Manager to prepare recommendations for citywide design standards for commercial and retail development. This was in response to findings that the City of Austin has among the lowest design standards of communities in the Central Texas region. The Council resolution specifically asked for standards for commercial development related to

- Landscaping
- Building façade materials
- Use of windows
- Façade articulation
- Lighting
- Convertibility
- Design modularity
- Development Orientation
- Transit and pedestrian amenities
- Public Spaces
- Neighborhood Access
- Parking
- Signage
- Screening of loading, mechanical equipment, storage and trash

**A Task Force consisting of Council Members McCracken and Alvarez, and Mayor Pro Tem Goodman,**



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along with Design Commissioners Girard Kinney and Richard Weiss, and Planning Commissioners Chris Riley and Matthew Moore met over several months to consider research and input from the public and stakeholders. Prior to developing a recommendation, the Task Force sought to understand the preferences of citizens and the regulations of other cities by reviewing the following:

- Results of the web-based survey of Austin residents and visitors conducted between March 12, 2004 and April 16, 2004. This survey resulted in 5,469 respondents..
- Development requirements in other U.S. cities
- Interviews of planners in other communities with design regulations
- Input from individual members of the Austin real estate community
- Input from public meetings with Stakeholder groups consisting of design and real estate professionals and neighborhood and environmental activists
- Findings by Robert Gibbs, national retail design expert, and the input from worksessions he led with the stakeholder group

The intent of these new regulations is to create a built environment of aesthetic and sustainable value that enhances economic development efforts to promote Austin's unique character and natural environment, and that upholds an efficient development review process.

Three major structural changes in how development is regulated are proposed:

1. Certain development regulations (setbacks, landscaping, signage) will be tied to the development parcel's roadway frontage(s), recognizing both that the roadway provides access to the site and to the urban design framework.
2. New commercial development will be subject to a set of minimum site and building design standards, recognizing that all new development, regardless of size, should be subject to minimum standards.
3. Site development permit plans and building permit plans must demonstrate that a minimum number of points are earned in order to gain approval, in addition to meeting the minimum regulations. This proposed point system offers flexibility, incentives to try innovative projects and allows for creativity.

**Attachments:**

**Task Force proposal  
Comparative Table of Recommendations**

# RAISING THE DESIGN STANDARDS IN AUSTIN, TX

Proposed Code Amendments to Improve Commercial Design  
Prepared by Council member Brewster McCracken's Task Force

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## **BACKGROUND**

### **City Council Resolution**

On February 26, 2004 City Council, in response to the findings that the City of Austin has among the lowest design standards of communities in the Central Texas region, directed the City Manager by resolution (#040226-27) "...to prepare recommendations for citywide design standards for commercial and retail development. These recommended citywide design standards shall constitute the best practices of the standards adopted by communities around the nation and shall require design standards that reflect Austin's unique historic, landscape and architectural character..." The Council resolution specifically asked for standards for commercial development related to:

- Landscaping
- Building façade materials
- Use of windows
- Façade articulation
- Lighting
- Convertibility
- Design modularity
- Development orientation
- Transit and pedestrian amenities
- Public spaces
- Neighborhood access
- Parking
- Signage
- Screening of loading, mechanical equipment, storage and trash

### **Task Force Research**

The Task Force, organized by Council member Brewster McCracken, met over several months to consider research and input from the public, various stakeholder groups and individuals. The Task Force consisted of three Council members (Brewster McCracken, Jackie Goodman and Raul Alvarez and their aides), two Design Commissioners (Girard Kinney and Richard Weiss) and two Planning Commissioners (Chris Riley and Matthew Moore). City staff participated in Task Force meetings as well. The Task Force sought to understand the preferences of citizens and the regulations of other cities prior to developing a recommendation, by reviewing the following:

- Results of the web-based survey of Austin residents and visitors conducted between March 12, 2004 and April 16, 2004. There was a record-setting 5,469 respondents.
- Development requirements in other US cities.
- Interviews of planners in other communities with design regulations.
- Input from individual members of the Austin real estate community.
- Input from public meetings with open Stakeholder group consisting of design and real estate professionals and neighborhood and environmental activists.
- Findings by Robert Gibbs, national retail design expert, and the input from worksessions he led with the open Stakeholder group.

### **Intention**

The intent of these new regulations is to create a built environment of aesthetic and sustainable value that enhances economic development efforts to promote Austin's unique character and natural environment and that upholds an efficient development review process.

The proposed new regulatory system will raise standards for all non-residential and mixed-use development, but within a regulatory structure offering options and flexibility, not strict requirements.

Three major structural changes in how development is regulated are proposed:

1. **Certain development regulations (setbacks, landscaping, signage) will be tied to the development parcel's roadway frontage(s), recognizing both that the roadway provides access to the site and to the urban design framework.**
2. **New commercial development will be subject to a set of minimum site and building design standards, recognizing that all new development, regardless of size, should be subject to minimum standards (See Applicability section below for when proposed requirements would be triggered).**
3. **Site development permit plans and building permit plans must demonstrate that a minimum number of points are earned in order to gain approval, in addition to meeting the minimum regulations. This proposed point system offers flexibility, incentives to try innovative projects and allows for creativity. (See Point System)**

### **Applicability**

Not all site plan and building plan permits must comply with the proposed code amendments. The table on the next page summarizes when a development must comply with a proposed code amendment. In all cases, any regulation from the Neighborhood Plan Combining District (NPCD), Neighborhood Conservation Combining District (NCCD), Planned Unit Development (PUD), Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) and all zoning overlays supersede these proposed code amendments to the extent of conflict. In addition, the current Code requirements apply where the proposed code amendments do not change the current requirements.

**Table of Applicability and Triggers for Proposed Code Amendments**

	<b>Development Orientation</b>		
DO-1	Revise site development regulations	All non-residential zoning districts	All new buildings, except additions to existing buildings.
DO-2	Limit parking in front yard along Urban Roadways	All non-residential zoning districts. Land use exemption list applies. <sup>1</sup>	"
DO-3	Orient buildings according to roadway type hierarchy	"	"
DO-4	Exception to maximum front setback to protect natural features	"	"
DO-5	Exception to Urban Roadway front yard parking limitation	Exception allowed for any use subject to limitation	"
	<b>Building Design</b>		
BD-1	Prohibit certain building materials	All non-residential zoning districts. Land use exemption list applies.	"
BD-2	Provide glazing on building facades	"	"
BD-3	Use clear glazing on ground-floor facades	"	"
BD-4	Use light-colored roofs	"	"
BD-5	Delete requirement for annual license fee for pedestrian cover in ROW	"	All remodels.
	<b>Parking</b>		
P-1	Establish maximum parking limits.	All non-residential land uses and vertical mixed-use projects.	When parking requirement triggered (25-6-471).
P-2	Exception to allow parking to exceed maximum parking limits	"	"
P-3	Allow parking adjustment for mixed-use projects	"	"
P-4	Allow adjustment of minimum parking requirements	"	"
P-5	Use light-colored pavement.	"	New parking lots only.
	<b>Landscaping</b>	All non-residential land uses.	When landscaping requirement triggered (25-2-981).
	<b>Stormwater Management</b>	All non-residential land uses.	All new stormwater facilities (triggered by subdivision and site plan).
	<b>Connectivity</b>		

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<sup>1</sup> A land use exemption list will list specific land uses not subject to the proposed code amendment. This list will be developed later after receiving input from the public and city staff.

<b>C-1 to C-5</b>	Create street-like internal circulation system	All non-residential land uses. Land use exemption list applies.	Projects that require site plans, except additions.
<b>C-6</b>	Reduce maximum commercial/industrial block length	All commercial and industrial zoning districts.	Current trigger for compliance with block length
	<b>Land Use &amp; Zoning</b>		
<b>LU-1</b>	Provide pedestrian service with drive-in services	All drive-in services	New drive-in services
<b>LU-2</b>	Limit gas pumps at service stations	All service stations	New service stations
<b>LU-3</b>	Provide public open space on large sites	All non-residential land uses. Land use exemption list applies.	Projects that require site plans, except additions.
	<b>Exterior Lighting</b>	All non-residential uses.	Projects that require site plans and building plans.
	<b>Signs</b>	Current applicability requirements in sign ordinance	Current trigger requirements in sign ordinance
	<b>Screening &amp; Compatibility</b>	All non-residential land uses. Land use exemption list applies.	Projects that require site plans.
	<b>Point System</b>		
<b>PS-1</b>	Obtain minimum points for site plan permit	All non-residential land uses. Land use exemption list applies.	Projects that require site plans, except additions.
<b>PS-2</b>	Obtain minimum points for building plan permit	"	Projects that require building plans, except additions and interior and exterior remodels.

## **DEVELOPMENT ORIENTATION**

### **Key Issues**

Orientation refers to where buildings sit on a site as well as where their principal entrances or "storefronts" are located. Currently in Austin's code, regulations related to orientation, such as building setbacks, depend solely on the property's zoning. While this approach is common throughout the US, there are three key problems with it:

- The building setbacks and other site development regulations are the same for each property within the same zoning district regardless of where the property is located and what kind of roadway provides its principal access. For example, a property located on a two-lane neighborhood collector street with GR zoning has the same setback and height requirements as a property with GR zoning on a major highway. The desired orientation of a commercial development depends primarily on what roadway it is on and what area of town it is in, but the current code does not consider these differences.
- Linking site development regulations solely by base zoning district results in zoning for site regulations, instead of zoning for land uses. For instance, it is not uncommon for an applicant to request CS zoning for the site development regulations, but only wanting GR uses.
- Along a single stretch of roadway, there are often a variety of zoning districts, each with different site development regulations. Currently, there could be three adjacent parcels on the same roadway with the same land use but with three different setback, height, impervious cover and FAR requirements.

In addition, survey results showed that a strong majority (70.5%), including the majority of real estate professionals, want to see a change in development orientation along non-highway roadways (Urban Roadways) so that buildings are built close to the street. In addition, cities around the US, including San Antonio, TX, San Diego, CA, Milwaukee, WI, Sarasota, FL and Portland, OR are now requiring buildings close to the street along certain roadways or within non-downtown zoning districts.

### **Proposed Code Amendments**

#### **DO-1. Revise site development regulations.**

To improve the responsiveness of zoning to location, to remove the inconsistency of having different regulations for the same use on the same roadway, and to create a cohesive development pattern, site development regulations will be dependent on the roadway type where the development occurs. Exceptions to the Urban Roadway setback requirements are proposed in *Amendment DO-4*.

**Table 1: Site Development Regulations per Roadway Type**

Roadway Type	Setbacks (in feet)						Max. Height <sup>2</sup> in feet	Building Cover/ FAR None- Impervious cover limit dictates <sup>3</sup>	
	Front		Rear		Side				Side Street
	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max			
1. Urban Roadway <sup>4</sup>	0	35		5	N/a	0	Consult front setback per road type	Zoning height	N/a
2. Hill Country <sup>5</sup>	50	N/a	25	N/a	N/a	N/a		Zoning height	N/a
3. Highway <sup>6</sup>	25	N/a	25	N/a	0	N/a		Zoning height	N/a

**DO-2: Limit parking in front yard along Urban Roadways.**

Along Urban Roadways, parking is prohibited between the building(s) and the front property line. See exceptions, Amendment DO-5.

**DO-3. Orient building(s) according to roadway type hierarchy.**

- 3a. At least one customer entrance must face the principal street and connect directly to principal street sidewalk as established through roadway type hierarchy, and at least one customer entrance must face and connect directly to sidewalk on street with existing transit service.
- 3b. If a property is located along or includes more than one road type, then the front setback, parking lot prohibition and principal entrances must be taken according to the hierarchy established in Table 1, with Type 1 being the priority.

<sup>2</sup> Building height will continue to be regulated by zoning district, however amendments to building height will be considered as part of the consultant-study to re-write the zoning code.

<sup>3</sup> Currently, both the watershed ordinances and the zoning ordinances regulate the maximum impervious cover limit. To reduce the conflict and complexity of having to review two ordinances, the zoning ordinances will be adjusted to reflect current watershed or zoning impervious cover limits, whichever is lesser.

<sup>4</sup> Includes all streets not designated as Hill Country or Highway.

<sup>5</sup> This roadway type applies on all properties within 1000 feet of FM 2222, FM 2244, FM 620, Loop 360 and Southwest Parkway.

<sup>6</sup> Includes highways, freeways, expressways, frontage roads identified in the Austin Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

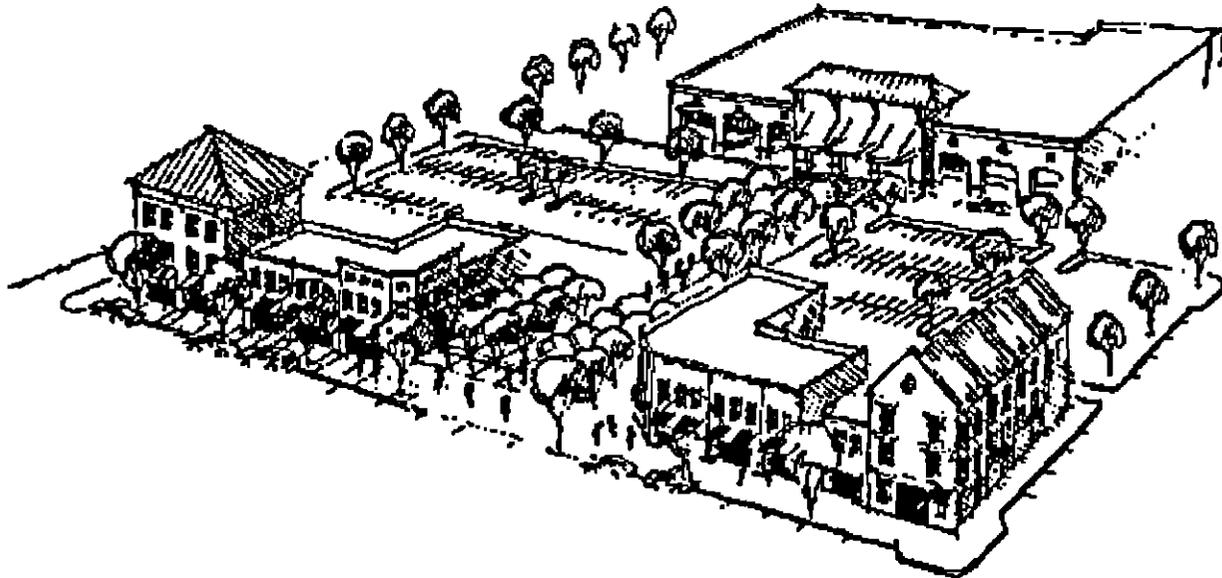
**DO-4: Exception to maximum front setback to protect natural features.**

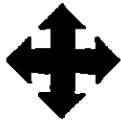
If a protected tree, a significant stand of trees or other desired natural feature such as a critical environmental feature, is located within the maximum front setback area, the setback area shall be increased to the extent needed to preserve the desired feature.

**DO-5: Exception to Urban Roadway front yard parking limitation.**

On an Urban Roadway, parking may be located in front of a building with a 50,000 square feet or greater footprint if the following requirements are met:

- a. Other buildings on the site have ground floor level walls within 15 feet of the front property line for at least 75% of each street frontage. Plazas adjacent to the front property line may be counted, but cannot exceed 25% of the street frontage. The buildings and/or plaza must be constructed before or at the same time as the building, or already exist. Along 75% of each street frontage, parking is prohibited within 50 feet of the ROW.
- b. The internal circulation system is designed so that it meets the standards proposed in Connectivity Amendment C-1: *Create street-like internal circulation system.*
- c. The main driveway leads directly to the primary entrance of the building located behind the parking lot.





## CONNECTIVITY & ACCESS

### Key Issues

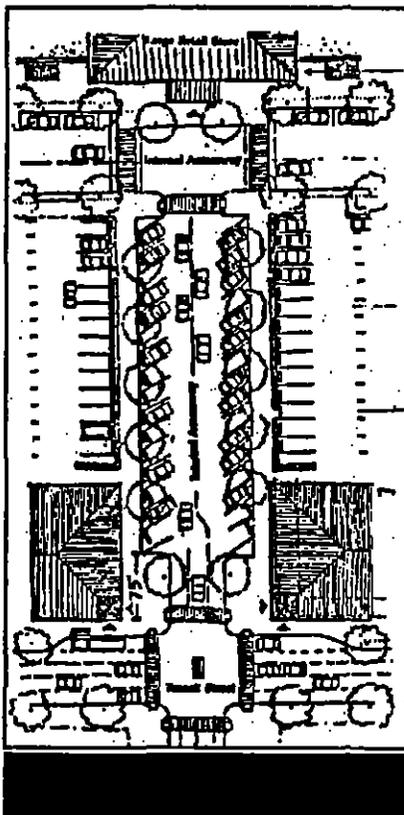
Connectivity refers to how people get to and move within the commercial development, either by foot, bike or motorized transport.

Of importance to many of those taking the survey and those concerned with traffic and air quality, is ensuring that access to commercial development is feasible and attractive by means other than the automobile. Six amendments are proposed that will enhance connectivity for all modes of transportation. These proposed amendments will also help create a built environment that encourages walking, thus helping to make Austin a fit city.

### Proposed Code Amendments

#### **C-1: Create street-like internal circulation system.**

To create an environment supportive of all modes of transportation, staff recommends that all driveways originating from the ROW or another site be designed like a street to accommodate pedestrians entering the site. This site design requirement will also facilitate the future infill development of the site by offering a street-like driveway to place buildings next to.



- a) Each driveway that intersects a street but does not exceed 275 linear feet must have at least one shaded and unobstructed sidewalk on one side.
- b) Along each driveway that intersects the street, exceeds 275 feet (as measured from the property line) and services a parking lot of at least 100 spaces or is on a site of at least 3 acres, shaded sidewalks are required on both sides of the driveway and must lead directly to a building entrance.
- c) Utility lines must be located within the drive areas, similar to a street.

**C-2: Provide shaded and weather protected sidewalk alongside building facing street and parking lot.**

For all building frontages adjacent to or facing parking, a shaded or weather-protected sidewalk raised above the level of the parking via a defined edge must be provided adjacent to the building. ADA ramps alongside the building must also be weather-protected or shaded. Shade is defined in Landscape L-1.

**C-3: Provide sidewalks within site.**

- a) Sidewalks are required within the site between all buildings. If there is a non-residential development adjacent to the site, a pedestrian connection to those buildings, up to the property line, and to an existing pathway if one is present on the adjacent site, must also be provided.
- b) For projects with parking located in the front yard, shaded sidewalks must be provided from the public sidewalk to the sidewalk alongside the building.

**C-4: Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections from adjacent ROW.**

Where a public ROW for Urban Roadway or parkland is adjacent to the property line, pedestrian and bicycle access must be provided from that ROW to the site. The pedestrian and bicycle access points must be fully accessible during operating hours.

**C-5: Enhance multi-modal connectivity by providing shower facilities.**

To facilitate daytime workouts (as part of the Mayor's fitness initiative) and commuting by walking and bicycling, non-residential projects must provide shower facilities for their employees according to the following table. The cost (maintenance and capital) and space of one shower facility and the lockers is equivalent to one parking space. The cities of Palo Alto, CA, San Francisco, CA, San Jose, CA and Arlington, VA also require shower facilities. A nationwide survey<sup>7</sup> of over 2,300 bicycle commuters showed that 57% had shower facilities at their destination. In another nationwide survey<sup>8</sup>, of people that did not commute by bicycle, 44% indicated that they would start to commute by bicycle if shower facilities were provided at their destination. Considering Austin's climate, shower facilities are a must to increase non-motorized means of commuting.

Land Use	Requirement
Office uses	1 shower facility and 3 lockers for buildings more than 10,000 sf <sup>9</sup>
Commercial uses	1 shower facility and 3 lockers for every building exceeding 50,000 sf of gross floor area
Industrial uses	1 shower facility and 3 lockers for every building exceeding 50,000 sf of gross floor area

<sup>7</sup> Moritz, William E., "Survey of North American Bicycle Commuters: Design and Aggregate Results" *Transportation Research Record* 1578, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> 1990 Nationwide Harris Poll: National Bicycling and Walking Study (requested by *Bicycling Magazine*). Summarized in *Developing Bike Central, Portland Office of Transportation*.

<sup>9</sup> ADA requirements may not permit a single unisex shower if the expected occupant load exceeds 10. The number of required showers may be increased to 2 ADA showers.

**C-6: Reduce maximum commercial/industrial block length.**

Austin's code currently allows commercial and industrial street block lengths of 2,000 feet. Downtown blocks are 276 feet by 276 feet. Therefore, a 2,000-foot by 2,000-foot block is the size of 53 downtown blocks.

To avoid the creation of "superblocks," which inhibit connectivity and increase traffic congestion, the commercial block length maximum should be reduced. The Traditional Neighborhood District (TND) requirements for commercial block length of 600 feet should apply city-wide.

- a) The standard commercial block length will be 600 feet. Any site plan for a development larger than 600 feet by 600 feet (approximately nine acres) must be organized into 600-foot blocks with the following permissible exceptions:
  - i. Blocks may be up to 1,000 feet in length (subject to negative points);
  - ii. Blocks may be between 276 feet and 600 feet (and receive positive points).
- b) The street/drive area of the blocks may either be public streets or private drives. If the streets are private drives, the block length is measured from center of intersection to center of intersection. If the streets are public streets, the block length is measured from curb edge to curb edge.
- c) Internal street networks must be organized in an interconnected grid. (Cul-de-sacs and other non-interconnected blocks are permitted subject to negative points in the point system, code amendment PS-1.) Curbside parallel parking is permitted on each new street.
- d) Contiguous green space and public plaza set-a-sides are not subject to the block-length requirements, but if longer than 800 feet, must be bisected by a pedestrian and bicycle shared use path every 800 feet.

**C-7 Provide for connections between sites**

Lack of interconnectivity between sites, with each site feeding onto a highway, is a major reason why traffic congestion in suburban areas is worse than in the urban core. To mitigate traffic congestion, each site permit application for developments along highways and Hill Country Roadways will be conditioned upon the applicant agreeing to a covenant prohibiting the site from denying connectivity to adjacent sites.

The condition will require that the applicant enter into a restrictive covenant for the site that permits drive connections from the adjacent sites at intervals of 276 feet (or 138 feet for an alley drive). An applicant is not required to create connections from its site to adjacent sites, but will receive positive points for each connection (as well as an administrative reduction of three parking spaces for each connecting drive- see parking amendment P-4.)



## PARKING

### Key Issues

For most development projects, surface parking lots account for the largest impervious cover on sites, creating or exacerbating the following problems:

- **Urban heat island effect:** Urban areas are warmer due to heat retained and transmitted by impervious surfaces (both pavements and roofs). The additional heat increases energy consumption to keep buildings cool during the warmer months.
- **Increased stormwater runoff temperature:** Increased water temperature can alter the aquatic ecosystem and even kill some species.
- **Increased pollutant load of stormwater runoff:** As water runs over the parking lot, it picks up more pollutants along the way. Building impervious cover does not contain as many pollutants as parking lot impervious cover.
- **Increased speed of stormwater runoff:** Without vegetation or infiltration into the ground, the water picks up speed across the impervious parking lot. Runoff from building roofs may fall directly to the ground or to gutters that distribute the runoff to pervious areas.
- **Increased parking supply reduces interest in utilizing less polluting and land-consuming modes of transportation.** Many retailers grossly exceed Austin's current minimum parking requirement in order to assure more than ample parking during the highest peak shopping days. This results not only in vastly increased impervious cover, and by providing an oversupply of free parking, it discourages the use of alternative modes of transportation, thereby increasing air and water (runoff) pollution.
- **Reduced pedestrian accessibility:** Many surface parking lots, due to their extreme size, detract from the pedestrian's ability to comfortably and quickly access the principal entrance.
- **Reduced tax revenue:** Parking lots consume a large amount of land that could otherwise be used for buildings with tax revenue-generating businesses or residences. The inefficient use of the land also results in development spreading out to the point that the commercial land uses are not within the City's taxing jurisdiction.
- **Visually-blighted environment:** A positive public view from our roadways is a critical one to foster, as this view is from which most visitors and residents experience, understand and form an image of the city. Large parking lots do not offer the visual appeal as a building or natural environment would.

**Proposed Code Amendments**

In November 2003 City Council approved changes to the parking requirements to benefit small business owners. These changes included reducing the minimum parking requirements for most land uses and for projects located in the Central City, reducing the required spaces by up to 20%. Additional amendments to the parking regulations are proposed to reduce the many impacts of parking on the environment, to enhance the tax base and to improve the image of Austin.

**P-1: Establish maximum parking limits.**

Over-parking of sites, the results of which are often described as "oceans of asphalt," creates visual blight and inefficient use of land that exacerbates suburban sprawl.

In keeping with best practices from around the nation (including San Antonio, TX, Portland, OR, Ft. Collins, CO, Suffolk, VA and Phoenix, AZ), and to reduce parking lot impervious cover, staff recommends establishing *maximum* parking limits for all non-residential land uses.

**Table A. Proposed Maximum Parking Requirements**

For all land uses that currently have a <i>minimum</i> parking ratio of	Proposed New Maximum
<b>1: 275sf</b> (All retail and office uses, except those listed below, or subject to Director determination)	<b>1: 250</b>
<b>1: 500sf</b> (furniture store, indoor sports and recreation, veterinary services, cultural services, university gym/classrooms)	<b>1: 400</b>
<b>1: 1,000sf</b> (indoor storage, exterminating services, and kennels)	<b>1: 800</b>
<b>Other (1:50 to 1:40)</b>	<b>20% less than current requirement</b>

**P-2: Exception to allow parking above maximum parking limits.**

The maximum parking requirement may be exceeded if at least 75% of the provided parking is located in a structured facility (above or underground) and is built with the same materials and similar design as the building for the principal use. The ground-level of the facility must comply with pedestrian-oriented use design requirements (to be established as administrative rules), such as minimum amount of windows, minimum ceiling height and entrance location, or the parking garage is completely wrapped with buildings consisting of any land use.

**P-3: Allow parking adjustment for mixed-use projects.**

Reduce parking by 60% city-wide for all vertical mixed-use (As with the University Neighborhood Overlay, the existing 20% central city parking reduction is not applied).

**P-4: Allow adjustment of minimum parking requirements.**

The minimum off-street parking requirement shall be reduced:

- a) By 1 space for each on-street parking space located in the ROW directly adjacent to the site. The on-street parking spaces are not counted towards the off-street maximum parking limit. Similar ordinances are found in Greensboro, NC, Charlotte, NC and San Diego, CA.
- b) By up to 10% to preserve significant trees, and up to 20% to preserve protected trees (similar ordinance in San Antonio, TX, Dallas, TX, Sarasota, FL and Nashville, TN). If the applicant provides more parking spaces than the minimum required, the additional parking spaces cannot result in the removal of significant stands of trees or protected trees.
- c) By 3 spaces for each drive that connects to drive on adjacent property.
- d) By 20 spaces for every car sharing vehicle provided or mixed-use projects with at least 100 residential units.
- e) By 1 space for each shower facility and 3 lockers provided if:
  - i. not required to provide shower facilities, or
  - ii. is in addition to the minimum requirements.

**P-5: Use light-colored pavement.**

To help reduce the heat generated by parking lots that contribute to the Urban Heat Island effect, all new parking lots must be constructed of light colored pavement. This includes light colored asphalt, concrete, and open-grid pavement system.

In addition, a rule will be processed in the Environmental Criteria Manual to allow the portion of a parking space located beyond the tire stop (generally the "nose") to be landscaped instead of paved. This measure allows cars to overhang the edge of landscaped areas, and thus reduces the amount of impervious cover.

- a. The landscaped area may be up to 2 feet of the front of the space as measured from a line parallel to the direction of the bumper of a vehicle using the space.
- b. Landscaping must be native ground cover plants; and
- c. Landscaped area counts toward parking lot interior landscaping requirements and toward any overall site landscaping requirements.

**P-7 Allow on-street parking**

Robert Gibbs, the national retail expert hired by the city, informed the city that each street-front parallel parking space produces \$300,000 per year in sales for street-front retail establishments. (may want to delete this sentence altogether- hurts proposal to require parking along the side or rear; and the safety argument is questionable) .

Therefore, a development on an Urban Roadway that builds up to the property line may, as a matter of right and if enough ROW exists for parking and sidewalks, create parallel parking. Any application for parallel parking in the ROW shall be approved administratively provided the commercial space is built up to the property line



## LANDSCAPING

### Key Issues

The comments from the survey and Task Force discussions indicated that the natural environment is a defining feature of Austin's character and the key element of its attractiveness. When asked to select one of two photos showing landscaping around a building, 89% of the survey respondents selected the photo showing preservation of existing native vegetation in its natural state, instead of the photo showing plants added to a site in a specific arrangement.

Currently in the Code, there is a "universal" landscape ordinance that applies in general to all projects that require site plans. Some land uses, areas and zoning districts have landscaping requirements that supersede a portion of the universal landscaping ordinance, such as the Hill Country Roadway and the Traditional Neighborhood District ordinance, but overall the universal landscaping ordinance sets the basic requirements for where plants should be located and how much area should be landscaped. The Environmental Criteria Manual regulates the permitted types of plants, the spacing of the plants and the options on how to comply with the Code requirement. Staff found in reviewing the ordinance that the goal of preserving native vegetation on developing sites are not as strong as they could be. In addition, the "universal" landscaping ordinance will not work as well with the staff proposal to have development orientation tied to roadway type since the requirements do not vary for site conditions, location or building design.

	<b>Urban Roadway</b>	<b>Hill Country</b>	<b>Highway</b>
<b>Characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buildings close to the street</li> <li>• Combination of undeveloped and developed sites</li> <li>• Close to residential areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building setback varies based on site conditions.</li> <li>• Mostly undeveloped, heavily-wooded sites.</li> <li>• Hilly terrain, with some steep slopes</li> <li>• Close proximity to nature preserves</li> <li>• Endangered species and plants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building setback varies based on site conditions and developer preference.</li> <li>• Combination of undeveloped and developed sites.</li> <li>• High noise levels</li> <li>• Often major entryways into the city</li> </ul>
<b>Landscaping Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide shade along property line for pedestrians</li> <li>• Facilitate future, compact redevelopment</li> <li>• Provide additional screening from residential uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect /buffer existing preserves</li> <li>• Emphasize landscape preservation and clustering instead of replacement mitigation</li> <li>• Focus on creating functional, connected wildlife habitat</li> <li>• Provide shaded bike and pedestrian facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on streetscape and appearance from highway</li> <li>• Facilitate future, compact redevelopment</li> </ul>

**Proposed Code Amendments**

**L-1: Revise general city-wide landscaping requirements.**

Applicable to all roadway types, the following would apply:

- a) To maintain Austin's distinctive natural environment and to conserve water, only plants and trees permitted in the "Grow Green" program may be used to satisfy landscaping requirements.
- b) Unless otherwise noted, "shade" shall mean any plants or structures that provide at least 50% opaque cover during the summer months from April to September.
- c) At least 75% of all required pedestrian pathways must be shaded. 100% of ADA ramps must be shaded.
- d) Mitigation for the loss of protected trees shall be calculated using canopy coverage lost (instead of by caliper inches, as currently done, and which inevitably results in reduced tree coverage on the site for at least 5-10 years).
- e) A bond must be posted prior to site-clearing for the value of the protected trees and significant stand of trees to be preserved. The value is equivalent to their replacement cost, plus 25%.
- f) On previously undeveloped sites with at least 50% tree coverage, the Limits of Construction area cannot exceed 10 feet from all proposed impervious cover (buildings, parking lots, etc).

**L-2: Urban Roadway landscaping requirements**

<b>Site</b>	
<p>At least 20% of landscape yard (area between the street ROW and a line that coincides with the front wall of the building and extends from the building corners to the side property lines) must be landscaped.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landscaping required for parking lots may count towards compliance with 20% requirement.</li> <li>• Landscaping required for screening parking lots and stormwater facilities is in addition to 20% requirement.</li> </ul>	<p>Buildings are located close to the street along Urban Roadways, and though there is not an extensive front yard to landscape, providing shade is important along streetfronts where public sidewalks are located.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 30% of hardscape surfaces should be shaded OR consist of a light-colored / high albedo (with a reflectance of at least 0.30) material.</li> <li>• Maintain current 20% landscape yard requirement for projects NOT subject to the maximum front setback.</li> <li>• For projects subject to the maximum setback shade must be provided in the front yard in either, or both, of the following forms:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trees spaced between 20 and 30 feet at intervals appropriate for selected tree species (either on the private property or in the ROW, depending on developer preference, utility easement location and approvals from City for license agreement). The planting area must be at least eight feet wide.</li> <li>• Light-colored awnings or other pedestrian cover at least eight feet deep projecting from the building (option available only if buildings are located within 15 feet of the property line).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Parking Lot</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60 square feet of landscaping required for every parking 12 spaces</li> <li>• 90 square feet of landscaping required for every 12 parking spaces in the landscape yard (<i>not applicable though since parking lots not permitted in the front yard on Urban Roadways</i>)</li> <li>• A landscaping median must be provided for every three parking bays in large parking lots (lots with three distinct areas).</li> <li>• A parking lot must have end islands landscaped with trees. This requirement counts toward 60 sf or 90 sf requirements.</li> <li>• A parking space may not be located more than 50 feet from a landscaped area, or more than 50 feet from a tree.</li> </ul>	<p>Along Urban Roadways, parking lots must be located to the side or rear of the building. Maintain current landscaping requirements, In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace requirement to have a tree a maximum of 50 feet from parking space with more flexible requirement to require that the parking lot be 30% shaded within 5 years. This shading requirement is in addition to the shading requirements for pedestrian pathways.</li> </ul>
<b>Visual Screening</b>	
<p>The following features must be partially and periodically obscured from view from the street by landscaping, or by the use of landscaping along with berms, walls or decorative fences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stormwater facilities</li> <li>• Area where motor vehicles are moved, loaded, parked or stored.</li> </ul>	<p>Maintain current requirement</p>

**L-3: Highway landscaping requirements**

<b>Site</b>	
<p>At least 20% of landscape yard must be landscaped.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landscaping required for parking lots may count towards compliance with 20% requirement.</li> <li>• Landscaping required for screening parking lots and stormwater facilities is in addition to 20% requirement.</li> </ul>	<p>Maintain current requirements. In addition, to improve the highway streetscape and provide shade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A planting strip at least 8 feet wide must be located along the front property line and planted with trees.</li> <li>• Each protected tree or significant stand of trees preserved within 25 feet of the front property line counts as two trees to be planted along the front property line.</li> <li>• At least 30% of hardscape surfaces should be shaded OR consist of a light-colored / high albedo (with a reflectance of at least 0.30) material.</li> </ul>
<b>Parking Lot</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60 square feet of landscaping required for every parking 12 spaces</li> <li>• 90 square feet of landscaping required for every 12 parking spaces in the landscape yard (not applicable though since parking lots not permitted in the front yard on Urban Roadways)</li> <li>• A landscaping median must be provided for every three parking bays in large parking lots (lots with three distinct areas).</li> <li>• A parking lot must have end islands landscaped with trees. This requirement counts toward 60 sf or 90 sf requirements.</li> <li>• A parking space may not be located more than 50 feet from a landscaped area, or more than 50 feet from a tree.</li> </ul>	<p>(Same as proposed for Urban Roadways:)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace requirement to have a tree a maximum of 50 feet from parking space with more flexible requirement to require that the parking lot be 30% shaded within 5 years. This shading requirement is in addition to the shading requirements for pedestrian pathways.</li> <li>• Delete large parking lot requirement to provide a landscaping median every three parking bays. The proposed pedestrian pathway and driveway tree planting requirements will provide the landscaping and shade.</li> </ul>
<b>Visual Screening</b>	
<p>The following features must be partially and periodically obscured from view from the street by landscaping, or by the use of landscaping along with berms, walls or decorative fences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stormwater facilities</li> <li>• Area where motor vehicles are moved, loaded, parked or stored.</li> </ul>	<p>Maintain current requirement.</p>

**L-4: Hill Country Roadway landscaping requirements**

<b>Site</b>	
<p>All of the following are required and are cumulative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 20% of the landscape yard must be landscaped.</li> <li>• At least 40% of the site must remain undisturbed.</li> <li>• Vegetation within 100 feet (50 feet on Southwest Parkway) of the dedicated ROW may not be cleared, unless the clearing is necessary to provide utilities and access to the site.</li> <li>• Clearing is prohibited within 25 feet of the dedicated ROW or drainage easement.</li> <li>• The landscaping required for parking lots may count towards compliance with 20% requirement.</li> <li>• Landscaping required for screening is in addition to 20% requirement.</li> </ul>	<p>Maintain current code requirements, with the following additions and revisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the site is located adjacent to dedicated parkland or conservation easement, there must be a native vegetated or undisturbed setback of 100 feet from the affected property line. If both this setback and the required roadway vegetative buffer would be more than 20% of the site, the roadway vegetative buffer can be reduced equal to 20% of the square footage of the property.</li> <li>• At least 30% of hardscape surfaces should be shaded OR consist of a light-colored / high albedo (with a reflectance of at least 0.30) material.</li> </ul>
<b>Parking Lot</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A landscaping median at least 10 feet in width must be placed between ALL parking bays. Trees are required in the medians at a density of 1 large tree and 2 small trees for every 20 linear feet of median length.</li> <li>• Natural areas within parking medians, if located outside the limits of construction, and areas where clearing is prohibited, count towards 40% undisturbed natural area requirement.</li> <li>• A parking lot must have end islands landscaped with trees.</li> <li>• A parking space may not be located more than 50 feet from a landscaped area, or more than 50 feet from a tree.</li> </ul>	<p>Maintain current landscaping requirements, but offer the following two options. Option 2 is required if the site exceeds 50% tree canopy coverage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option 1: At least 30% of the parking spaces must be shaded within 5 years.</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option 2: Landscaping for parking lots may be consolidated into one to three large areas within or adjacent to the parking lot. The consolidated area must be at least 50 sf in area for each parking space and contain many of the protected or significant stands of trees on site. To prevent high-speed diagonal movement, a landscaping strip at least 4 feet wide and consisting of native grasses and bushes, must be provided for every third parking bay.</li> </ul>
<b>Visual Screening</b>	
<p>The following features must be partially and periodically obscured from view from the street by landscaping, or by the use of landscaping along with berms, walls or decorative fences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stormwater facilities</li> <li>• Area where motor vehicles are moved, loaded, parked or stored.</li> </ul>	<p>Maintain current requirements.</p>



## LAND USE & ZONING

### Key Issues

Commercial design extends beyond just the aesthetic to the functional. The design of commercial development that offers people a chance to live, work and recreate in the same area is key to improving public safety and health, increasing economic revenue within the City and improving quality of life. Permitting responsible mixed-use development will be a critical step towards this goal. Amendments are proposed to encourage mixed-use and to mitigate the impacts of land uses that can be incompatible or nuisances for pedestrians and residential uses.

### Proposed Code Amendments

#### **LU-1: Provide pedestrian service with drive-in services.**

A business that offers a drive-in service must provide a similar service for a pedestrian that does not require the pedestrian to walk or stand in a vehicle lane.

#### **LU-2: Limit gas pumps at Service Stations.**

On Urban Roadways and Hill Country Roadways, the number of gas pumps per service station site may not exceed eight.

#### **LU-3: Provide open space on large sites.**

For a site that is 3 acres or larger, 10% of the site must be open space, that can be plazas, playgrounds and nature preserves. A fee may be paid in-lieu of providing open space on site. The fee will be based on building square footage and will be used by the City to purchase open space. Similar legislation may be found in the US, including locally in Round Rock, TX. Open space is required in their C-2 commercial zoning district.

#### **LU-4: New Vertical Mixed Use (VMU) standards**

To encourage the construction of vertical mixed-use projects city-wide, a zoning provision will be created titled "Vertical Mixed Use" or "VMU." Owners of any property with the MU combining district may administratively elect to use the VMU development standards.

VMU development standards will have the following features:

1. The ground floor must have a different use from the top floor.
2. The building has no front or side setbacks.
3. The ground floor must have active uses that open onto the sidewalk.
4. The ground floor active uses must comprise at least 75% of the net length of frontage. (Net frontage is determined by taking the gross length of street frontage and subtracting required drive aisles and stairs that occur at the building perimeter.)
5. Spaces for ground level pedestrian uses shall be at least 24 feet deep.

These are standards similar to the ones enacted in the University Neighborhood Overlay district.

## EXTERIOR LIGHTING

### Key Issues

The Land Development Code currently does not regulate exterior lighting, except if triggered by compatibility standards when single-family zoning or uses are located near commercial uses.

Poor lighting causes four major problems:

1. *Reduces public safety.* Glare and excessive contrast makes it difficult to see well at night. In fact, the major reason older drivers prefer not to drive at night is due to the glare caused by poor lighting<sup>10</sup>. Excessive contrast makes it difficult for the eyes to adjust quickly resulting in impaired vision, which can lead to tragedy for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.
2. *Wastes energy.* Lighting that is excessive, poorly configured or ineffective wastes energy and money.
3. *Causes light trespass.* Even if a residential area is not located within the area that triggers compatibility standards for a commercial development, light may still trespass onto residential areas.
4. *Creates light pollution.* The inability to see the night sky due to city lighting is light pollution. The pollution reduces the attractiveness of Austin as a place to live and inhibits both basic amateur and professional astronomical viewing.

The International Dark-Sky Association created a handbook titled "Outdoor Lighting Code Handbook" that provides guidelines for developing a lighting code.<sup>11</sup> Many cities throughout the US have adopted city-wide lighting ordinances including Tucson, AZ, Albuquerque, NM, Seattle, WA and Hailey, ID.



Photos from [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org)



<sup>10</sup> International Dark Sky Association [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.darksky.org>

## Proposed Code Amendments

### **EL-1. Use fully shielded light fixtures** Requirements

- a) All outdoor lighting fixtures shall be fully shielded light fixtures. All light fixtures shall be installed and maintained in such a manner that the shielding is effective as intended.
- b) Flood or spot lamps must be aimed no higher than 45 degrees above straight down (half-way between straight down and straight to the side) when the source is visible from any off-site residential property or public roadway.
- c) Seasonal decorations shall be permitted in all lighting zones from Thanksgiving thru 15 January.
- d) All light fixtures shall be located, aimed or shielded so as to prevent stray light trespassing across property boundaries.
- e) The use of laser source light or any similar high intensity light for outdoor advertising or entertainment, when projected above the horizontal, is prohibited.

### New Definitions

**Fully Shielded Light Fixture.** A lighting fixture constructed in such a manner that all light emitted by the fixture, either directly from the lamp or a diffusing element, or indirectly by reflection or refraction from any part of the luminaire, is projected below the horizontal as determined by photometric test or certified by the manufacturer. Any structural part of the light fixture providing this shielding must be permanently affixed.

**Light fixture.** The complete lighting assembly (including the lamp, housing, reflectors, lenses and shields), less the support assembly (pole or mounting bracket); a light fixture.

**Outdoor light fixture.** An outdoor illuminating device, outdoor lighting or reflective surface, luminous tube, lamp or similar device, permanently installed or portable, used for illumination, decoration, or advertisement. Such devices shall include, but are not limited to lights used for:

- A. parking lot lighting;
- B. roadway lighting;
- C. buildings and structures;
- D. recreational areas;
- E. landscape lighting (that exceeds certain voltage);
- F. billboards and other signs (advertising or other);
- G. product display area lighting;
- H. building or structure decoration;
- I. building overhangs and open canopies.

### Applicability

- a) All development that requires a site plan, building plan or change of use permit.

- b) All lighting located in the public ROW.

**Submission of Plans and Evidence of Compliance with Code**

All site plans must submit the following information:

- a) Location on the premises of all lighting fixtures, both proposed and any already existing on the site and in adjacent ROWs;
- b) Description of all lighting fixtures, both proposed and existing. The description may include, but is not limited to, catalog cuts and illustrations by manufacturers (including sections where required).

**Lamp or Fixture Substitution**

Should any outdoor light fixture or the type of light source therein be changed after the permit has been issued, a change request must be submitted to the designated official for approval, together with adequate information to assure compliance with this Code, which must be received prior to substitution.

**Non-Conforming Lighting**

All outdoor lighting fixtures lawfully installed prior to and operable on the effective date of this Code are exempt from all requirements of this code until January 1, 2014. Compliance with the intent of this Code at all State and Federal facilities is encouraged.

**Exemptions**

- a) Emergency lighting, used by police, firefighting, or medical personnel, or at their direction, is exempt from all requirements of this code for as long as the emergency exists.
- b) Underwater lighting used for the illumination of swimming pools and fountains is exempt from the shielding standards, though it must conform to all other provisions of this code.

## SIGNS

### Key Issues

Four main concerns were expressed in the stakeholder discussions and survey comments about signage in Austin:

1. Survey results indicated that "monument" signs are preferable to pole signs on scenic roadways. Projecting and hanging signs are preferable on urban roadways, where development will be located close to the public sidewalk, however these are currently not permitted.
2. Some building facades and roofs are painted in certain colors or designed in certain shapes typical for a certain store and are used as a way to advertise the store. The "branded" buildings are essentially signs that do not comply with sign area calculations.
3. Up-ward and internally-lit signs contribute to light pollution and glare.
4. Address numbers are difficult to find, and sometimes are not present at all, making it difficult to find a business. Improving the visibility of street addresses also helps emergency service personnel find a place.

Currently the City of Austin does not have sign inspection or enforcement. To insure that current and the proposed new regulations are enforced, the Task Force will propose a fee ordinance in the near future to require annual sign fees to support enforcement staff.

Changes to all the commercial sign districts are proposed, however please note that the historic district signage requirements are not affected by this proposal.

### Proposed Code Amendments

#### **S-1: Add and revise new sign definitions.**

Currently, the sign ordinance defines commercial flag, freestanding sign, multi-tenant center sign, projecting sign, roof sign, sidewalk sign and wall sign. The Task Force recommends defining and permitting the following other types of signs not currently defined in the Code:

***Awning sign.*** Any awning containing signage used to identify a business, profession, service, product, or activity conducted, sold or offered on the premises.

***Perpendicular sign.*** A sign that is suspended from the underside of a horizontal plane surface projecting from the building or is directly attached to the building facade and majority of sign area is perpendicular to the building facade. This includes projecting signs.

***Internally Illuminated Sign.*** A sign illuminated by light sources enclosed entirely within the sign cabinet and not directly visible from outside the sign.

**Monument sign.** Any freestanding sign that does not have more than 15% free clearance between the face of the sign and the ground or is supported by a monolithic structure which is not less in width than one-half the maximum sign width.

**Mural sign.** Non-commercial pictures, not advertising a product or service which is sold on the premises, painted on or attached to the exterior walls.

**Opaque.** Opaque means that a material does not transmit light from an internal illumination source. Applied to sign backgrounds, means that the area surrounding any letters or symbols on the sign either is not lighted from within, or allows no light from an internal source to shine through it.

**Pole sign-** A freestanding sign supported by or placed upon one pole or standard.

**Neon Sign.** A sign including luminous gas-filled tubes formed into text, symbols or decorative elements and directly visible from outside the sign cabinet.

**S-2: Revise city-wide sign regulations.**

- a) Currently logos, company names, product names, and service and merchandise descriptions are included in the sign area calculation. However, to prevent the use of a building as a sign, staff proposes that the sign area calculation include any areas on the wall and roof of the building that have trademarked or copyrighted colors, graphics or shapes. This excludes any cloth awnings that may be used.
- b) Along Hill Country Roadways, the signs must comply with the Hill Country building materials requirements.
- c) Signage shall be prohibited on rear building facades or along service facades (loading areas).
- d) New pole signs are prohibited in all sign districts.
- e) Delete LDC section 25-10-23 (7) which prohibits signs that have less than nine feet of clearance and is located within a triangle formed by connecting the intersection point of two streets and the points 45 feet from the intersection point on the street frontage property line of each intersecting street. This section is unnecessary since the Transportation Criteria Manual specifies requirements for site triangles along roadways.
- f) Any portion of a wall mural or art piece that does not contain the logo, trademarked or copyrighted company name or colors of the company and is unique to the site and to the City of Austin jurisdiction shall not be counted towards the sign area.

- g) If the sign is unique to the site and to the City of Austin jurisdiction and is produced by an artist registered with the Arts in Public Places (AIPP) Program, the allowable sign area may be increased by 100%, as long as the company name and logo do not exceed the maximum sign district area. AIPP website: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/aipp/>
- h) The operation of searchlights for advertising purposes is prohibited.
- i) Internally illuminated signs are prohibited on Hill Country Roadways only (currently also prohibited in the Neighborhood Sign District, which applies to projects in TND zoning and Neighborhood Plan special uses).
- j) Outdoor internally-illuminated advertising signs must either be constructed with an opaque background and translucent text and symbols, or with a colored (not white, off-white, light gray, cream or yellow) background and generally LIGHTER text and symbols.

**S-3: Revise sign districts, areas and heights**

As part of the proposal to tie regulations to roadway type, the Task Force proposes that the sign ordinance be modified to reflect the creation of the Highway, Hill Country Roadway and Urban Roadway Types.

Current Regulations			Proposed Regulations		
Sign Districts	Applicability	Signs Permitted	Sign Districts	Applicability	Signs Permitted
Expressway Corridor	IH-35, US 183, US 290, SH 71	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freestanding or roof</li> <li>• Wall</li> <li>• Commercial flag</li> </ul>	Highway	Designated AMATP Highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monument or roof</li> <li>• Perpendicular</li> <li>• Wall</li> <li>• Awning or Commercial Flag</li> </ul>
Scenic Roadway	Roadways listed in LDC 25-10-6 <sup>12</sup> and Hill Country Roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freestanding</li> <li>• Wall</li> </ul>	Hill Country Roadway	Currently-designated Hill Country Roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monument</li> <li>• Perpendicular</li> <li>• Wall</li> </ul>
Neighborhood Sign	TND, NPCD Infill options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wall, awning, berm or hanging sign</li> </ul>	Urban Roadway	All other roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monument</li> <li>• Perpendicular</li> <li>• Wall or Awning or Commercial Flag</li> <li>• Sidewalk</li> </ul>
Neighborhood Commercial	LO, LR, CR and W/O zoning districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freestanding</li> <li>• Wall</li> <li>• Commercial flag</li> </ul>			
Commercial Sign	Includes land not in any other sign district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freestanding or roof</li> <li>• Wall</li> <li>• Commercial flag</li> </ul>			

<sup>12</sup> The following are subject to the Scenic Roadway sign district regulations (those in bold are Hill Country Roadways): Arterial 8 (Adelaide Dr./Forsythia Dr.); Barton Springs Road; Loop 1; Loop 360 (south of US 183); RM #20 (from SH 71 to Anderson Mill Road); RM 2222 (west of Mopac); RM 2244; Lake Austin Blvd.; West Cesar Chavez St.; Riverside Drive; Spicewood Springs Road (from Mesa Dr to Loop 360); William Cannon Dr (Brodie to Southwest Pkwy); Escarpment Blvd (William Cannon Dr. to Arterial 11 (SH45)); Arterial 5 (McKinney Falls Pkwy from US 183 to William Cannon Dr.); FM 973 (from SH 71 to US 183); SH 71 east of IH 35; US 183 South of SH 71; Cameron Rd. (north of 183); Farmer Lane (except for the area between Loop 1 and IH 35); Stansley Lane, east of IH 35; Slaughter Lane; and Old Spicewood Springs Rd. (from Loop 360 to Old Lampasas Trail); Southwest Parkway.

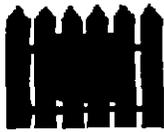
**Table of Proposed Changes to the Sign Area and Height Requirements**

Sign Districts	Signs Permitted	Proposed Sign Area and Height
	(1) Monument or Roof for each street frontage	Decrease current maximum size and height applicable to the Expressway Sign District: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monument and Roof Sign Area FROM 60sf sign area for lots with less than 86 linear feet of street frontage, or 300 sf sign area for lots with more than 86 linear feet of street frontage TO TOTAL signage (all signs) 60 sf for single tenant, and 20 sf for each additional tenant up to a maximum of 200sf.</li> <li>• Monument Sign Height FROM the greater of 35 feet above frontage street pavement grade; or 20 feet above grade at the base of the sign TO 12 feet</li> <li>• Roof Sign Height FROM lesser of five feet above the building façade or five feet above the maximum height permitted for a freestanding sign TO the same (maintain current requirements).</li> </ul>
	(1) Projecting or Hanging for each store	Projecting or hanging signs cannot exceed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 35 square feet in area</li> <li>• Lesser of 6 feet, or distance equal to 2/3 the width of abutting sidewalk (same as current downtown requirements for projecting signs)</li> </ul>
	(1) Awning or Commercial Flag, for each store	Counts towards wall sign area calculation.
	Wall	FROM Wall cannot exceed 20% of building façade area of the first 15 feet of the building and 10% of total building façade area, OR 64sf, whichever is less TO 1 sf for each 1 lineal feet of building façade to a maximum of 400 sf.
	(1) Monument	Maintain current requirements: Sign area cannot exceed 0.4 square feet for each linear foot of street frontage or 64 square feet.
	Wall	FROM total sign area (including all signs, except freestanding) is limited to 10% of the façade area of the first 15 feet of the building TO 1 sf for each 1 lineal feet of building façade to a maximum of 400 sf.

	(1) Monument for each street frontage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain current requirements: Sign area cannot exceed 0.4 square feet for each linear foot of street frontage or 64 square feet</li> <li>A monument sign cannot exceed 12 feet in height.</li> </ul>
	(1) Projecting or Hanging for each store	<p>Projecting or hanging signs cannot exceed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>35 square feet in area</li> <li>Lesser of 6 feet, or distance equal to 2/3 the width of abutting sidewalk (same as downtown requirements for projecting signs)</li> </ul>
	Awning	Counts towards wall sign area calculation.
	Wall	FROM Wall cannot exceed 10% of building façade area of the first 15 feet of the building (in neighborhood commercial sign districts) and 20% of the first 15 feet of the building façade (in commercial sign districts), OR 64sf, whichever is less TO 1 sf for each 1 lineal feet of building façade to a maximum of 400 sf.
	(1) Commercial Flag for each store	Counts towards wall sign area calculation.
	Sidewalk	Maintain current requirements

**S-4: Provide visible street address numbers**

Street addresses, visible from the public ROW, must be located on the sign or the building. The street address, up to 10 square feet, does not count towards sign area.



## SCREENING & COMPATIBILITY

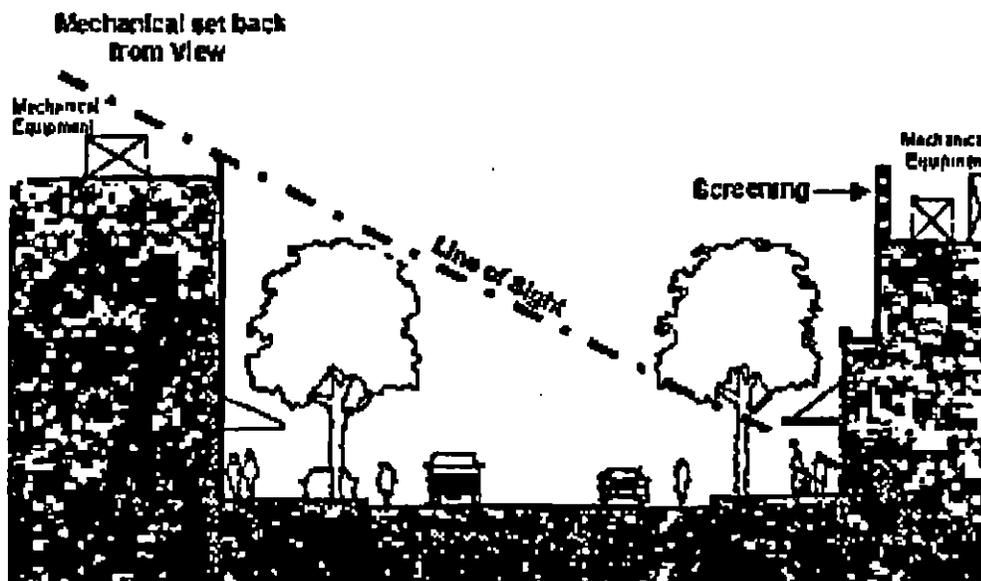
### Key Issues

One of the goals of this commercial design initiative is to improve the quality of development near neighborhoods and to encourage the construction of well-designed and compatible mixed-use projects. Several amendments are proposed to accomplish both goals.

### Proposed Code Amendments

#### **SC-1. Screen equipment and utilities.**

Currently, screening of mechanical equipment, trash dumpsters and other utilities is required when residential uses are located near the commercial development and in the downtown CBD and DMU zoning districts. The Task Force wants to extend this requirement city-wide to all commercial development, regardless of location. For all non-residential development within the City of Austin, regardless of roadway type, all mechanical, solid waste and utility-related equipment must be screened from public view, including rooftop equipment. See illustration below.



**SC-2. Set storage, utilities, trash collection and loading areas minimum distance away from pedestrian pathways, sidewalks and residential uses.**

The current compatibility design regulations require that refuse receptacles cannot be located within 20 feet of properties with SF-5 zoning or uses (25-2-1067). This amendment extends that requirement to other situations:

- No areas for outdoor storage, trash collection or compaction, loading or other such uses shall be located within 20 feet of any public street, public sidewalk, residential use (regardless of zoning) or internal pedestrian pathway. This does not apply to the accessible ADA route required to serve the trash collection area.

**SC-3. Allow adjustment of compatibility standard setbacks for driveways and parking lots.**

For non-residential and mixed-use development that is subject to the compatibility setbacks for driveways and parking lots, those setbacks may be reduced to five feet if the building is located within the minimum and maximum front building setback area and no off-street parking is provided in front of the building. A solid, opaque fence and landscaping of small to high bushes or small trees must be planted along the edge of the lot lines. Currently, the Code allows the parking to be located 5 feet from the property line adjacent to single-family zoning or uses, however only if the commercial site is less than 53 feet wide. This amendment will extend that right to wider sites. This will be especially helpful for those smaller sites that are wide, but shallow in depth.

**SC-4. Permit higher height for vertical mixed-use development.**

For new vertical mixed-use development, the height may be increased 5 feet more than height set by compatibility standards. Only residential uses are permitted on the upper stories and non-residential (that is not accessory to a residential use) must be at least 50% of the ground floor area.



## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

### Key Issues

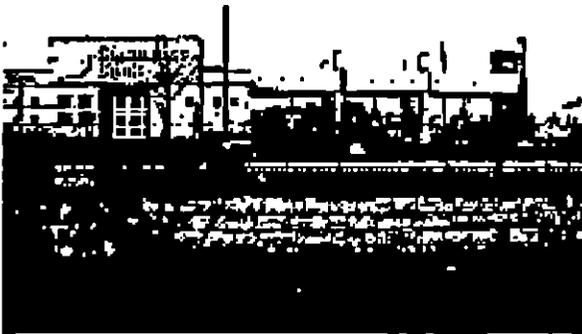
Concerns about the design of stormwater management facilities were expressed in the survey comments and during stakeholder discussions. Many stormwater facilities are constructed with concrete walls and are not integrated aesthetically or functionally into the site, resulting in an unattractive facility, even if screened with vegetation.

### Proposed Code Amendments

#### **SM-1: Provide well-designed stormwater facilities.**

All stormwater facilities are required to comply with the requirements below.

- All supporting walls of structural facilities must be constructed of or faced with stone within 25 feet of the ROW.
- If fencing is required, chain-link fences are prohibited if within 25 feet of the public ROW.
- Facilities are integrated into the landscape to the greatest extent possible (minimize structural facilities) or facilities serve dual functions, such as being designed as a fountain in a plaza. The area of the facility would count towards the required site and parking lot landscaping.



#### **SM-2: Remove restrictions on current water quality exceptions for redevelopment.**

Staff recommends that the following conditions for the redevelopment exception offered in LDC section 25-8-26 be deleted:

- *25-8-26 Redevelopment Exception*: The water quality requirements do not apply to the redevelopment of the property if the redevelopment:
  - 1) does not increase the existing amount of impervious cover;

- 2) provides the level of water quality treatment prescribed by current regulations for the redeveloped area or an equivalent area on the site;
- ~~3) does not generate more than 2,000 trips a day above the estimated traffic level on April 17, 2000; The water quality control exemption should not be tied to traffic generation requirements.~~
- ~~4) is consistent with the neighborhood plan adopted by Council, if any and This is not needed since a site plan or subdivision cannot be approved without the proper zoning.~~
- 5) for property in the drinking water protection zone, combined with all other redevelopment of the site since April 17, 2000 does not affect more than 25 percent of the site's impervious cover.

**SM-3: Allow for innovative water quality treatment processes.**

Staff recommends revising 25-8-213 so that all water quality treatment processes are not required to be equivalent to sedimentation /filtration systems.

**SM-4: Allow use of existing impervious cover for mixed-use projects.**

Staff recommends that all new vertical mixed-use development projects may use existing impervious cover on a site as long as the impervious cover on the site was permitted at the time it was added. Only residential uses are permitted on the upper stories and non-residential (that is not accessory to a residential use) must be at least 50% of the ground floor area.



## BUILDING DESIGN

### Key Issues

Building design is regulated in many communities throughout the US (an estimated 3000 cities<sup>13</sup>) to improve the look of the community, and in some communities, to enforce a certain character or style. For instance, in Sante Fe, NM adobe-style buildings are required. In Austin, as heard from stakeholders and as seen in some survey comments, diversity in building design is important, so the staff proposal is not prescriptive about requiring buildings to be of a certain style. The staff proposal instead focuses on the basic design elements of buildings that help create a safe, comfortable and sustainable building.

### Proposed Code Amendments

#### **BD-1: Prohibit certain building materials.**

The following are prohibited exterior building materials:

- plain concrete block (painted or unpainted)
- EIFS (Exterior Insulation Finishing System)
- Vinyl siding
- Roofing products with lead
- Concrete tilt-up walls without knock-out panels (To be acceptable, knock-out panels should allow for a storefront module at the ground floor of 12' wide x 12' tall minimum every 75 feet. Upper-story modules should allow a minimum for window openings of 10' square every 20 feet.

#### **BD-2: Provide glazing on building facades.**

Glazing refers to glass, either in windows or doors. Glazing provides daylighting in the store, which reduces energy costs, and improves public safety by allowing "eyes" on the street.

- For buildings with 50,000 square feet or greater footprint, all facades (with the exception of a single facade facing the loading area) must have glazing.
  - At least 50% of the front wall area that is between 2 and 10 feet above grade must consist of glazing.
  - At least 25% of the wall area on all other facades, except the facade facing the loading area, must consist of glazing.
  - Second-floor front facades must provide a minimum of 25% glazing between 3' and 8', as measured from that story's finished floor level.
- For buildings less than 50,000 square feet, at least 50% of the front wall area that is between 2 and 10 feet above grade must consist of glazing. Second-floor front facades must provide a minimum of 25% glazing between 3' and 8', as measured from that story's finished floor level.

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<sup>13</sup> American Planning Association

**BD-3: Use clear glazing on ground-floor facades.**

The glazing required for ground-floor facades that face the street or parking lot must have a Visible Transmittance (VT) of 0.6 or higher. The windows may not be covered and may not be blocked by picture windows or display boxes.

**BD-4: Use light-colored roofing.**

Buildings must use roofing having a Solar Reflectance Index (SRI)<sup>14</sup> as required in the table below for a minimum of 75% of roof surface; OR install a vegetated roof for at least 50% of roof area; OR install a combination of vegetated roof and SRI-compliant roof for at least 75% of roof area.

Low-slope roof: less than or equal to 2:12	SRI = 78
Steep slope roof: > 2:12	SRI = 29

**BD-5: Delete requirement for annual license fee for pedestrian cover in ROW.**

Currently in the CBD and DMU zoning districts, owners of buildings with pedestrian cover, such as awnings or balconies, over the public sidewalk do not pay an annual license fee, which is typically charged by the City for all private structures in the ROW. Staff proposes to extend that to all non-residential zoning districts to encourage the construction of buildings with pedestrian cover over the public sidewalk.

Staff shall also prepare two or more pre-approved performance criteria-based designs each for awnings and balconies. An applicant who builds to the property line and who elects to construct a pre-approved design for an awning or balcony in the ROW shall be administratively approved to receive a license without a fee for the awning or balcony (This last sentence implies that pedestrian cover that does not meet the pre-approved designs will not be able to have the fee waived. I do not think that is what is intended).

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<sup>14</sup> Solar Reflectance Index (SRI) combines reflectivity and emittance to measure a roof's overall ability to reject solar heat. The Environmental Energy Technologies Division at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (<http://eandc.lbl.gov/CoolRoof/membrane.htm>) lists SRI values associated with several different brands and types of low-slope membranes. Steep slope roofing applications can be found with a SRI up to 62.]



## POINT SYSTEM

### Key Issues

The goal of this Council Initiative is to raise the minimum standards for all non-residential and mixed-use development. To reach this goal, one request emerged repeatedly from stakeholder discussions and survey comments: when establishing standards, allow diversity and flexibility. In other words, raise the standards, but provide options on how to reach the new goal.

In researching the codes of other cities, staff found that Colleyville, TX and Santa Fe, NM have minimum requirements that all projects must meet, as do many other cities. In addition, though, a permit is not released in those cities until a minimum number of points are earned from selecting additional requirements from a list of options. This approach insures basic design requirements to create acceptable development, but allows for innovation and encourages use of "best practices." A point system offers flexibility as well as the opportunity to encourage what cannot or should not be required for all projects.

Projects with a commercial or office use, including vertically mixed-use projects, must earn a minimum number of points before receiving a site development permit and a building plan permit. The requirement to meet a minimum number of points and the point options will be stated in the Land Development Code, however an explanation of the point options will be processed through the rules posting process and located in the soon-to-be-created *Urban Design Criteria Manual*. (<http://www.cityofaustin.org/development/rulerew.htm>).

How applicants achieve these points must be demonstrated on the site development permit plan and on the building plan.

### **PS-1. Obtain minimum points for site plan permit.**

All site plans earn at least 100 points. This requirement would be triggered for all non-residential or vertical mixed-use site plans.

Table 1 shows the proposed options for site plan permits.

LAND USES		
<b>VERTICAL MIXED USE:</b> Site contains a building zoned VMU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional points for each VMU building</li> <li>• Additional points for each VMU building where mix of uses includes at least 25% residential</li> </ul>	H	

Provides horizontal mix of uses on same site plan.	M	
Provides a minimum of 10% of site in publicly-accessible, outdoor amenity (open space, plaza, preserve).	L	
Provides publicly accessible or viewable public art certified/approved through AIPP process.	L	
Provides residential units on site	M	
<b>PARKING</b>		
Does not exceed lowest maximum parking limit (i.e., does not choose to exceed parking maximum through parking bonuses allowed through Parking PCAs).	M	
Provides underground parking for min. 75% of parking provided.	H	
Provides above-ground, structured parking for min. 75% of parking provided.	H	
Provides access to parking lot only through alley or rear access easement.	M	
Uses pervious paving (including pervious concrete) on parking lot and sidewalk.	M	
Uses light-colored concrete instead of asphalt.	M	
Parking is located to the rear of building (no parking provided on the side or in the front other than parallel parking in ROW)	M	
Removes existing curb cuts and does not add any new curb cuts.	L	
<b>CONNECTIVITY &amp; ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES</b>		
Records a public access easement to connect existing or planned City trails or to provide connectivity through the site to another site.	M	
Constructs internal drives/private streets to City street standards with driveway block lengths that do not exceed 600 feet.	M	
Where preliminary plan is not required, voluntarily submits preliminary plan to provide street network that complies with block length requirements. (Points given only for projects that do not have to submit preliminary plan before site plan stage.)	H	
Constructs block lengths less than 600 feet but greater than 275 feet (more points the shorter the block length)	H	
Connect driveway to driveway on adjacent site.	M	
Connect to dead-end street with vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle access.	M	
For large sites of 3 acres or more, containing substantial open space for water quality purposes, and where the pedestrian and bicycle route is greater than ¼ mile in length to the building entrance or the access is to an existing or planned greenbelt, the access is a shared use path built to City of Austin standards.	L	
<b>REDEVELOPMENT</b>		
Reduces existing number of parking spaces to comply with maximum parking requirements.	M	
Redevelops within Desired Development Zone on already developed property.	H	
Converts existing non-building impervious cover into additional building coverage.	M	
Develops site recognized by City as a "brownfield" or "blighted." Fiscal posting required to guarantee remediation has occurred before construction. Bond must be posted for long-term clean-ups.	H	
Preserves historic resources and structures and incorporates them into the development.	H	
Removes all existing free-standing signs on poles and/or off-premise signs that are on site. (Points awarded per number of signs and size of signs.)	L	
Redevelops an existing service station into a non-automotive use.	M	

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT		
Restores previously disturbed waterway on-site or adjacent to site.	H	
Utilizes Low Impact Development methods as alternative to structural controls (i.e., provides natural landscaping treatment of detention and water quality features).	H	
Provides stormwater detention on site previously developed legally without those stormwater controls through use of wet pond or underground stormwater detention.	M	
Provide water quality treatment on-site (instead of paying a fee in-lieu of) in qualifying watersheds through use of wet pond.	M	
LANDSCAPE & SHADE		
10% increments more shade (canopy) provided than required. (+ points for each 10% increase)	L	
Exceeds compatibility screening requirements by installing a fence and native shade trees in 20 foot increments along property line where compatibility is triggered.	L	
Preserves significant & protected trees by transplanting them to other areas of site.	M	
Provides full streetscapes per Great Streets standards in the public ROWs of all urban roadway frontages (license fees waived if this option is chosen)	M	
Plant street trees in public ROW (license fee is waived). (Points per tree.)	L	
OTHER		
Makes financial contribution to Hill Country Conservancy for open space acquisition. (Earn points per dollar amount.)		
Does not develop under older regulations if an option (qualifies under 1704, but chooses not to comply).	H	
Buries all existing overhead utilities along entirety of roadway frontages (on or off-site). (partial points for partial burial)	H	
TOTAL OF POSITIVE POINTS		
LESS: NEGATIVE POINTS FOR UNDESIRABLE FEATURES		
Provides a drive-through service visible from street entrance.	L	
Drive-through in a single use detached building or in a building where the use combines with a gas station.	L	
The drive-in service is located within 100 feet of a residential use or district.	L	
A drive-in service with the window and ordering area located along the front or street side facade is within 1000 feet of another drive-in service with the window and ordering area located along the front or street side facade.	L	
Extra negative points for each drive-through bay greater than one.	L	
Sites larger than 2 acres consist of only one land use type.	M	
Sites larger than 2 acres consist of only one user.	M	
Site organized in physically disconnected single-user buildings (pad site configuration). (Negative points for each disconnected building.) Disconnected means separated by parking area.	M	
Street frontage of site consists of physically disconnected buildings (highway pad sites). (Negative points for each disconnected building located on street frontage, including highway frontage.)	M	
Site contains block lengths greater than 600 feet (more points the longer the block length up to 1,000 feet).	H	
Site contains cul-de-sacs or dead end streets/drives (other than dead end streets/drives terminating at the property line). Negative points for each cul-de-sac or dead end street/drive.	L/M/H	
Auto-oriented uses (auto sales, auto washing, service stations) and/or drive-in service are located on a corner lot on an Urban Roadway	H	

Negative points for each building with a footprint that is greater than 50,000 SF, that is single-story and has only one user with exterior entrance.	M		
Street frontage for a single land use exceeds 100 feet.	L		
Curb cut onto highway or arterial (negative 10 points for each curb cut greater than one).	M		
Buildings on site orient to highway (power center configuration)—( see Mueller Design Book)	M		
Distance between customer entrances to non-residential uses and street frontage exceeds 100 feet.	L		
<b>OVERALL TOTAL:</b>			

**PS-2. Obtain minimum points for building plan permit.**

Table 2 shows the proposed options for building plan permits. This requirement would be triggered only for building plans that either had a site plan that had to comply with amendment PS-1 or for projects that are more than just an interior remodel. Building plans subject to this requirement must earn 50 points.

POSITIVE POINTS		
Project earns Green Building Program rating, submits signed Letter of Intent by schematic design phase. (Points earned increase with each additional star rating.) (Minimum of 3-stars is required for any building of 50,000 square feet or larger.)	L/M/H	
ALTERNATIVE TO GREEN BUILDING POINTS: Project earns LEED rating, submits compliance letter from LEED review committee. (Points based on LEED rating level.)	M/H	
Improves storefronts to new regulatory standard for glazing type/size & shading.	H	
At least 75% of all building facades consist of masonry or brick.	M	
For buildings with footprint of 50,000sf or more, "liner" stores are provided along at least 25% of all street-facing and parking lot-facing facades (excluding loading areas and rear facades). The liner stores must be attached to the building and consist of windows and entrances directly to the outside.	H	
Facades are broken up horizontally by architectural elements at least every 50 feet.	L	
Building is 2 or more stories of active use or 50% of combined square footage of building is on upper stories.	M	
Building(s) have pitched roof(s) or varied roofline(s).	L	
Provides "green roof(s)" for at least 50% of flat roofed areas. (40 points if all green roofs)	M/H	
Side & rear facades are similar architectural treatment/materials as front & street sides of building.	L	
Acquires a recommendation for design from Design Commission.	M	
Contracts registered architect to provide original context-sensitive design and contract administration services.	H	
Building is connected/shares a wall with an existing building.	M	
VMU zoned building with residential.	H	
Complies with neighborhood design guidelines, as prescribed in the Urban Design Criteria Manual.	L	
If a commercial use or addition to office use, provides additional shower and locker facilities above minimum requirement or provides shower and locker facilities if not required by Code.	L	
<b>TOTAL OF POSITIVE POINTS</b>		
<b>LESS: NEGATIVE POINTS FOR UNDESIRABLE FEATURES</b>		
Building locates subtenants entirely inside principal building, with no independent storefront/access.	H	
Building(s) are greater than 20' tall, floor to roof, without having a functional 2 <sup>nd</sup> story (movie theatres are exempt.)	M	
False fronts or shaped parapets are created to increase apparent size of building or house signage/corporate identity logos, etc.	L	
Building is a prototype, or any portion of exterior consists of trademarked or copyrighted design features used by national chain.	H	
Frontage of any single user exceeds 100 feet, or there is greater than 100 feet between public entrances to building on the primary face and on any street frontage.	M	
<b>OVERALL TOTAL:</b>		



# Citywide Design Standards

## Hill Country Roadways

### Roadway Class

-  Hill Country
-  Other Major Roadways

### Selected Commercial Zoning Categories

-  (LR, GR, CS, NO, LO, GO, LI, CH)





# Citywide Design Standards

## Highways

### Roadway Class

-  Highways/Freeways
-  Other Major Roadways

### Selected Commercial Zoning Categories

-  (R, GR, CS, NO, LO, GO, LI, CH)

